



UPDATE

September/ October 2013

A bi-monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve Veterans. Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to Barry.Venable@va.gov

Connect. It matters.

Family. It matters.

Ask the question. It matters.

Friendship.

Compassion. It matters.

Support. It matters.

Listen. It matters.



It Matters.

We're in this together.

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VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Calendar of Events

Monday, September 2—**Outpatient Clinics Closed** for Federal Holiday.

Tuesday, September 3 & 17, October 1 & 15—**St. Cloud Area Veterans Law Clinic**, 12 to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

Appointments are held at the St. Cloud VA in Building T-100.

Monday, September 9— Listen to the Bob Hughes hosted **Veterans Radio Show** on KNSI, AM 1450/FM 103.3. Program begins at 8:10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 12—**Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training**. Do you want to help someone that may be experiencing emotional distress? Learn what you can do to identify someone at risk for suicide as well as what you can do to provide hope and save a life from suicide. Attend Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training, Sept. 12, 7 p.m., St. Cloud Library, Mississippi Room. The training is presented by Mary Jo Pine, RN, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the St Cloud VA HCS. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Saturday, September 14—**Suicide Prevention Awareness 2K Walk/Run/Stroll**. Concerned about Suicide? Show your support and become more aware about what you can do to save lives from suicide. Participate in the Suicide Prevention Awareness 2K Walk/Run/Stroll. Check in at Bldg. 92 (Reid Building). No preregistration required. This event is open to Veterans and the community. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Sunday, September 15—**Camp Ripley Open House**, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. See ad on page 5 for more details on the event.

Calendar of Events

September 18 & October 16—Listen to the **Voices for Veterans Radio Show** on WJON AM 1240. Program begins at 8:10 a.m.

September 20 and October 18—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m., at the Montevideo CBOC. FREE legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer Law, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-430-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Friday September 20—**Theatrical presentation by Jennifer Tudor** tells about her journey following the death by suicide of her father. Begins at 2 p.m. in the St. Cloud VA Auditorium (Bldg. 8)

Tuesday September 24—**Drop in Legal Clinic**- Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, in partnership with Central Minnesota Legal Services, invites you to participate in a free legal clinic covering child support & family law, employment, benefits, expungement and debt collection. Hours are 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and clinic is held in the St. Cloud VA HCS Auditorium - Building 8. For more information contact: Sara Sommarstrom – MACV, at 651.224.0292, ssommarstrom@macv.org.

Tuesday, September 24—**Women Veterans Health and Wellness Event**. Come and join us for the 6th Annual Women Veterans Health and Wellness Event on September 24 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Bldg. 96. This year's theme is Healthy Eating and Weight Management. See article on pg. 22 for registration information.

Monday October 7—Listen to Bob Hughes hosted **Veterans Radio Show** on KNSI, AM 1450/FM 103.3. Program begins at 8:10 a.m.

Calendar of Events

October 14—**Outpatient Clinics Closed** for observance of Columbus Day, a Federal Holiday.

Friday, October 25—**St. Cloud Stand Down**, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., National Guard Armory, 1710 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud. Offers on-the-spot assistance to all Veterans, with a large variety of services offered by community organizations. All Veterans welcome. For more information contact 211—United Way, or 800-543-7709.

Monday, October 28—**Spa Day for Women Veterans**. DAV Auxiliary gives women Veterans and Auxiliary women a day to have fun and get something special done. Contact DAVA commander, Carmen Mickelson, at (320) 267-4380 for reservation and additional information. This free event has limited space and must be signed up in advance.

USELESS FACTS:

—The human eyes can perceive more than 1 million simultaneous visual impressions and are able to discriminate among nearly 8 million gradations of color.

—Howard Hughes was the first individual ever to be the sole owner of a major motion-picture company.

FAVORITE QUOTATION:

"You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." - Mark Twain

CAMP RIPLEY *OPEN HOUSE*



FEATURING • Classic Car Show • Inflatable Obstacle Course • Rock Wall Climbing • State Patrol Display • Camp Ripley Environmental Display • Military Museum • HMMV, Tank & Helicopter Display • Food, Beverages & MORE!

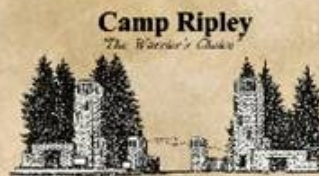
Sunday, September 15, 2013
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.



HEROES OF THE HOMEFRONT CEREMONY



Begins at 1:00 p.m.
All Vets register in Building 1-2
from 12-12:30 p.m.



For more information call
SSG Tim Krouth
at 320-616-2714

Preventing Suicide: Get Help, It Matters

Suicide is a major public health problem. In fact, it is a leading cause of violent death in the United States; accounting for over 38,000 deaths in 2010, the latest year for which the Centers for Disease Control has statistics available.

Veterans are not immune. According to a VA report on Veteran suicides, an estimated 18 to 22 Veterans die by suicide every day. The loss of even one Veteran to suicide is one too many.

Everyone is in a unique position to recognize Veterans who are at risk for suicide and to take action to get them the help they need.

Recognize some of the common warning signs:

- Depression, feelings of hopelessness, or suicidal thoughts
- Impulsiveness, extreme anxiety, agitation, irritability, or risky behavior
- Withdrawal from others; giving away treasured belongings
- Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed
- Abuse of alcohol, drugs, or other substances

Remember, if you are concerned about a Veteran, friend, or a family member, and you think they may be considering suicide, you can **ACT** to prevent suicide.

A – Ask the question – Ask directly “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”

C – Care of the individual– Listen with compassion, show understanding and produce relief.

T – Take action – Do not leave the person alone and seek professional help. *(cont. next page)*

(Preventing Suicide, cont.)

If you're a Veteran in crisis or know a Veteran who is, confidential support is only a phone call, click, or text away. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year through the Veterans Crisis Line (**1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**), online chat at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net> or text (**838255**).

The Veterans Crisis Line, online chat, and text-messaging service are free to all Veterans, even if you are not registered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or enrolled in VA health care. Hundreds of Veterans call every day, and start to get back on track.

The Veterans Crisis Line is staffed by caring, qualified VA responders—

Confidential chat at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **838255**



many of whom are Veterans themselves. They understand what Veterans have been through and the challenges Veterans of all ages and service eras face.

Crisis feels different for everybody and can arise from a wide range of situations before, during, or after military service. Some Veterans are coping with aging, stress, or similar challenges faced during civilian life while others may experience difficulties in their relationships or transitioning back to employment or education.

Whatever's got you down—chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, or even homelessness—a Veterans Crisis Line responder can provide support, day or night.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Connect. It matters.

Family. It matters.

Ask the question. It matters.

Friendship.

Compassion. It matters.

Support. It matters.

Listen. It matters.



It Matters.

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We're in this together.

Confidential help for Veterans and their families



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Confidential chat at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **838255**

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

This Suicide Prevention Month, Show Veterans They Matter

September is Suicide Prevention Month, a chance for all of us to focus on the things that matter. When it comes to Veterans who face difficult challenges, we're all in this together.

You can get the conversation started today. Visit VeteransCrisisLine.net/SPMToolkit to download free Suicide Prevention Month materials and help spread the word.

Get involved. Attend one of these St. Cloud VA-hosted events:

September 9 to 13: Informational displays in the VA Canteen.

September 12, at 7 p.m., **Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training** is being offered at the St. Cloud Public Library's Mississippi Room. Gatekeeper training programs offers participants the knowledge to respond to someone in crisis and can save lives.

September 14, a **2K Walk/Run/Stroll** is planned from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., on the VA campus in St. Cloud. The event is open to Veterans, families, and the public. Participants can complete the 2K anytime between 9 a.m. and noon. There is no pre-registration required, and participants should check-in at Bldg. 92. Please park in the two visitor's parking lots located south of the Building 1 Main Entrance.

September 20, from 2 to 3 p.m., dramatist **Jennifer Tudor** will present her story of survival in the VA Auditorium, located in Bldg. 8. This one-woman play powerfully describes Tudor's experiences following the death of her father from suicide.

For more information about these events please contact Mary Jo Pine at 320-252-1670 ext. 6719

Experience Health for Life

Does your health matter to you? At the St. Cloud VA, our goal is to assist you in establishing your own personal health plan which enables health and well-being so that you can pursue everything else that matters to you!

Health for Life Tips on Facebook is designed to provide you convenient health coaching and support messages and reminders on a wide variety of topics in support of your health goals.

It's free... "like" us on Facebook to help you stay healthy!

www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS

Stay healthy!

Like us to learn how!





For the past 10 years, My HealthVet Vet been bringing Veteran's health information to their fingertips, and continues to work to bring even more. My HealthVet is now offering the **Veterans Health Library**. This library is a new online resource designed to provide Veterans with a range of trusted health information in any easy to understand format. In addition to this, in January, My HealthVet released the VA Blue Button feature. If you use the VA Healthcare System, you are now able to view more of your VA health care record, including:

- VA Notes
- VA Vital signs and Readings
- VA Problem List
- VA Pathology Reports
- VA Radiology Reports
- VA Admission/Discharge Summaries
- VA Appointments
- VA Lab Results (including microbiology)

Quote form a Veteran who uses My HealthVet Vet.

"Before my diagnosis, I thought I was just tired – stressed and fatigued, working long hours with the wounded, ill and injured. Then all of a sudden, it's as if I was hit with a ton of bricks. I wasn't sure how I was going to cope, how I was going to adjust. All of a sudden, these online health record features become more than just features. Now, I'm relying on My HealthVet for continuity of care and disability evaluation..."

For 10 years and counting, My HealthVet has worked to put Veterans in control of their health care. Take control today, register at www.myhealth.va.gov.

What you should know about VA Health Care and the Affordable Care Act



What is the Affordable Care Act?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to affordable health care coverage to all Americans, lower costs, and improve quality and care coordination. Under the health care law, people will have:

- health coverage that meets a minimum standard (called “minimum essential coverage”);
- qualify for an exemption; or
- make a payment when filing their taxes if they have affordable options but remain uninsured.

In 2014, Health Insurance Marketplaces will be a new way to find health coverage. On the Marketplaces, some people may be eligible for lower costs on premiums and out-of-pocket costs based on their income.

At a glance

- VA wants all Veterans to get health care that improves their health and well-being.
- If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don’t need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards.
- The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans’ out-of-pocket costs.
- If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.

If I’m enrolled in a VA health care program, do I meet the requirement for health care coverage?

Yes. If you are enrolled in any of VA’s programs below, you have coverage under the standards of the health care law:

- Veteran’s health care program
- Civilian Health and Medical program (CHAMPVA)
- Spina bifida health care program

What are the benefits of VA health care programs?

- Medical care rated among the best in the U.S.
- Immediate benefits of health care coverage. Veterans may apply for VA health care enrollment at any time.
- No enrollment fee, monthly premiums, or deductibles. Most Veterans have no out-of-pocket costs. Some Veterans may have to pay small copayments for health care or prescription drugs.
- More than 1,400 places available to get your care. This means your coverage can go with you if you travel or move.
- Freedom to use other plans with your VA health care, including Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE or private insurance.
- You have met the new requirement to have health care coverage.

If I'm not enrolled in a VA health care program, how can I apply?

You can apply for VA health care at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting your local VA health care facility.

Where can I get more information?

Visit VA's website at www.va.gov/aca, or call us at 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., eastern. For more information about the Marketplace, visit www.healthcare.gov.

[Home](#) [Veteran Services](#) [Business](#) [About VA](#) [Media Room](#) [Locations](#) [Contact Us](#)

I AM A...
Select One

[VA » Health Care » Affordable Care Act](#)

VA, Affordable Care Act and You

▼ Health Benefits

Health Benefits Home

▶ Apply for VA Care

▶ Determine Costs

▶ Non VA Care

▼ Affordable Care Act

Overview

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Veterans Not Enrolled in VA Health Care

Family Members

Freely Asked Questions

▶ Conditions & Treatments

▶ Wellness Programs

▶ Locations

▶ Research

▶ Special Groups



Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care

Veterans Considering Health Care with VA

Family Members

Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care

If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.

[Find out »](#)

What is the Affordable Care Act?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to coverage, control health care costs and improve health care quality and care coordination. **The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.**

Already Enrolled?

Considering VA?

Family Members

FOR MORE

Visit www.va.gov/aca today!

VA Health Care and the Affordable Care Act Frequently Asked Questions



What is the Affordable Care Act?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to affordable health care coverage to all Americans, lower costs, and improve quality and care coordination. Under the health care law, people will have:

- health coverage that meets a minimum standard (called "minimum essential coverage") by January 1, 2014;
- qualify for an exemption; or
- make a payment when filing their taxes if they have affordable options but remain uninsured.

In 2014, Health Insurance Marketplaces will be a new way to find health coverage. On the Marketplaces, some people may be eligible for lower costs on health premiums and out-of-pocket costs based on their income.

At a glance

- VA wants all Veterans to get health care that improves their health and well-being.
- If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards.
- The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.
- If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.

What happens if I do not have health coverage?

You do not have to make a payment if you have coverage that meets a minimum standard (called "minimum essential coverage"). If you have access to affordable coverage but remain uninsured starting in 2014, you may have to make payment when filing your taxes. This payment will either be a flat fee or a percentage of your taxable household income, depending on which amount is higher. This payment will be phased-in according to the schedule below:

- \$95 or 1% of your taxable income in 2014
- \$325 or 2% of your taxable income in 2015
- \$695 or 2.5% of your taxable income in 2016

Exemptions from the payment will be granted under certain circumstances. For more information on these exemptions, visit www.healthcare.gov.

If I'm enrolled in a VA health care program, do I meet the requirement for health care coverage?

Yes. If you are enrolled in any of VA's programs below, you have coverage under the standards of the health care law:

- Veteran's health care program
- Civilian Health and Medical program (CHAMPVA)
- Spina bifida health care program

What are the benefits of enrollment in VA health care?

Enrollment in VA health care means you have:

- Medical care rated among the best in the U.S.
- Immediate benefits of health care coverage. Veterans may apply for VA health care enrollment at any time.
- No enrollment fee, monthly premiums, or deductibles. Most Veterans have no out-of-pocket costs. Some Veterans may have to pay small copayments for health care or prescription drugs.
- More than 1,400 places available to get your care. This means your coverage can go with you if you travel or move.
- Met the new requirement to have health care coverage that meets the minimum standard.

How do I enroll for VA health care coverage?

You may apply in one of three convenient ways. To enroll, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit your local VA health care facility.

Can I continue to use VA health care with other programs, like private insurance or federal health care programs?

Yes. You can continue to use VA for all your health care needs, or complement your VA care with private health insurance or coverage by other federal health care programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, and TRICARE.

What's the Health Insurance Marketplace?

Beginning in 2014, the Marketplace is a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance (for example, health coverage other than VA health care programs) that fits your budget and meets your needs. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums.

I am enrolled in a VA health care program. Would I be eligible for assistance to pay health insurance premiums on the Marketplace if I choose to purchase health care outside of VA?

Since VA care meets the standard for health care coverage, you wouldn't be eligible for assistance to lower your cost of health insurance premiums if you chose to purchase additional health care coverage outside of VA. However, you may still purchase private health insurance on or off the Marketplace to complement your VA health care coverage.

How will I know if I'm eligible for assistance to purchase health insurance outside of VA?

VA can't make this determination. If you use the Marketplace, you will find out if you can get lower costs on your monthly premiums for private health insurance plans. Remember, if you are a veteran enrolled in (or are a beneficiary of) a VA health care program, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health coverage requirements under the health care law.

Are my family members (who aren't eligible for VA or other federal health care programs) eligible for assistance to purchase health insurance?

Your family members who are not enrolled in a VA health care program may use the Marketplace to get coverage. They may get lower costs on monthly premiums or out-of-pocket costs. They could be eligible for free or low-cost coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Starting October 1, they can submit an application for health care coverage through the Marketplace, and learn the amount of assistance they are eligible for. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov.

Can I cancel my VA health care coverage?

Yes. However, acceptance for future VA health care coverage will be based on eligibility factors at the time of application, which may result in a denial of health care coverage.

Where can I get more information?

For information on VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, visit VA's website at www.va.gov/aca, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., eastern. For information on the Marketplace, visit www.healthcare.gov.

IB 10-532
July 2013

St. Cloud VA to Provide Pertussis and Influenza Vaccines

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System is joining with the Stearns-Benton Medical Society's Central Minnesota Community Immunization Campaign to help stop the spread of pertussis, or whooping cough. Pertussis vaccinations will be offered along with annual influenza vaccinations to all Veterans and employees.

In 2012, over 4,639 confirmed, probable, and suspect cases were reported to the Minnesota Department of Health.

As of August 15, 595 confirmed or suspected cases of pertussis have been reported to MDH throughout Minnesota.



Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a disease caused by a bacteria that affects the lungs. Pertussis is spread through the air in droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. The best way to prevent pertussis is for all children to be fully vaccinated on time and for adolescents and adults to get a booster shot.

MDH recommends statewide vaccination of children starting at age 10 years, regardless of whether the child is from an area of high incidence. This change is due to persistently high incidence of pertussis disease in children ages 9-12 years. *(cont. next page)*

(Flu, cont.)

MDH also recommends increased vaccination efforts for incompletely vaccinated children age 7 to 10 years, healthcare workers, pregnant women, persons in contact with infants, and adults in contact with children 10-12 years of age.

Dr. Susan Markstrom, St. Cloud VA Chief of staff, says many Veterans initially question the need for pertussis vaccination.

“We simply ask them if they are around children and if they want the child to stay healthy, Markstrom said. After hearing that, most simply roll up their sleeves.”

The St. Cloud VA’s pertussis program began in March, when a screening and vaccination program for all patients was put into effect. Veterans can find out if they need vaccination at their next provider visit, or they can call their health care team.

Flu and pertussis vaccination clinics for Veterans are planned for Oct. 2 and 3, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day, in Bldg. 96 on the St. Cloud VA campus. Additional clinics are planned for Oct. 8, from 4 to 7 p.m., and Oct. 12, from 8 a.m. to noon, in the west lobby of the main entrance (Bldg. 1).

Spouses, significant others, caregivers, and Veterans who are not enrolled for health care with the VA can also receive a seasonal flu shot at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center from 9 to 11 a.m., on Oct. 2 and 3. A fee of \$29 is required, and may be paid in cash or billed to the individual’s health insurance. Spouses, significant others, and caregivers should bring their health insurance card to the clinic.

(cont. next page)

(Flu, cont.)

Additional flu and pertussis clinics are planned at the VA outpatient clinics in Alexandria, Brainerd, and Montevideo.

At the Brainerd VA Clinic, flu and pertussis vaccinations will be given on Oct. 22, Oct. 25, from 10 a. m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. each day, and on Nov. 5, from 1 to 3 p.m.

At the Montevideo VA Clinic, flu and pertussis vaccinations will be given on Sept. 25, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At the Max J. Beilke VA Clinic in Alexandria, flu and pertussis vaccinations will be given on Oct. 10 and Oct. 23, from 12:30 to 4 p.m. each day.

Further updates to the flu shot program at the St. Cloud VA will be announced on the flu shot information line: (320) 255-6444.



St. Cloud VA HCS Director Barry I. Bahl and Chief of Staff Susan Markstrom have received their shots and encourage everyone to get vaccinated against pertussis and the flu.

Flu Shot Clinics

For Veterans receiving VA health care at St. Cloud VA & the Max J. Bielke, Brainerd, & Montevideo CBOCs

Again this year – flu vaccinations will be offered to spouses & significant others at the St. Cloud VA 9:00-11:00 am on Oct. 2 & 3. Payment (\$29) will be required or your health insurance can be billed.

Please bring your insurance card(s).

St. Cloud VA

Building 96 (West side of campus)

October 2: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

October 3: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Building 1 (Main Building)

October 8: 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

October 12: 8:00 a.m. - Noon

Max J. Bielke CBOC

515 22nd Avenue E. - Alexandria, MN

Oct. 10: 12:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Oct. 23: 12:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Brainerd CBOC

722 NW 7th Street – Brainerd, MN

Oct. 22: 10:00 a.m. – Noon & 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Oct. 25: 10:00 a.m. – Noon & 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Nov. 5: 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Montevideo CBOC

1025 North 13th Street - Montevideo, MN

Sept. 25: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Any changes to the flu vaccination clinic schedule will be announced on a recorded message at: (320) 255-6444.

Whooping cough shots are also available.

For those of us who need an occasional reminder, here is a sign. Print it out and paste it on your refrigerator to remind you to stay healthy this year by getting your flu shot!

Nine Things To Do Today to Stay Healthy

Be Involved In Your Health Care: Take an active role-Work with your health care team to improve your health

Be Tobacco Free: Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health-Don't use tobacco in any form

Eat Wisely: Eat a variety of foods including fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains-Limit salt, fat, sugar and alcohol

Be Physically Active: Avoid inactivity. Aim for at least 2 ½ hours of aerobic activity each week

Strive for a Healthy Weight: If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help-If you are normal weight, congratulations, maintain it

Limit Alcohol: If you choose to drink, limit to no more than 1 drink a day for women, 2 drinks a day for men-Avoid "binge drinking"

Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations: Recommendations for screening tests depend on your age, gender, health status and family history-Ask which screening tests and immunizations are recommended for you

Manage Stress: Learn how to recognize stress and pay attention to stress-Learn ways to help you manage and reduce stress

Be Safe: Find out how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, falls and motor vehicle crashes-Take action to protect yourself, and those you love, from harm.

A Recipe for Health

Cooked Apple Dessert

Ingredients

4 sm. To med. Apples (a sweeter variety like Gala or Red Delicious)
1/8 tsp. cinnamon
1 T. water

Directions

Peel, core and dice apples, Place apples and water in a glass bowl. Shake cinnamon on top and cover with a plate. Microwave on high until apples are tender. Stir midway through cooking process if your microwave doesn't cook evenly. Stir after cooking, so the cinnamon is mixed in while apples are still hot. Some pectin from the apples will mix with the water and cinnamon during cooking. If allowed to cool to room or refrigerator temperature, the pectin, water and cinnamon will thicken to a glaze-type coating. Stir again and divide into 4 bowls. Serves 4.

Nutritional Information: 165 calories, 2g fat, 33g carbohydrates, 3g protein, 127mg sodium.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

★ *You served, you deserve the best care anywhere.* ★

St. Cloud VA Women Veterans Program to host Health and Wellness Event

The Women Veterans Program at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System will host the Sixth Annual Women Veterans Health and Wellness Day on September 24. The event celebrates women Veterans and their military service by emphasizing healthy lifestyles and medical care unique to women. This year's event is scheduled for 5:30 to 8 p.m., in Building 96 on the St. Cloud VA Medical Center campus in St. Cloud.

The event features presentations and exhibitions of popular techniques for calming the mind, soothing the spirit and strengthening the body. This year's activities include mindful eating techniques, organic foods discovery and tastings, and using a mindful labyrinth. Flu and pertussis vaccinations will be available, and light refreshments will be served.

All women Veterans are encouraged to attend but attendance is limited to the first 50 participants who register. There is a \$5 individual participation fee. A reduced participation fee of \$8 is available for women who bring a woman Veteran friend along. Women Veterans may call (320) 255-6371 for information on how to register.

Women Veterans Call Center

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Women Veterans hotline—1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)—is an incoming call center that receives and responds to questions from women Veterans, their families, and caregivers across the nation about available VA services and resources. 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636) provides a single avenue for women Veterans to get the help

News Briefs



Disabled American Veterans of MN present DAV Community Heroes Award to Curt and Pam Karls

Curt and Pam Karls, owners of Marantellis Pizza and local realtors for Edina Realty recently received MN DAVs Community Heroes Award at the DAV event recognizing and celebrating the Twin Cities' *Community of Heroes*sm.

Curt and Pam Karls are residents of Cold Spring, MN and the founders / coordinators of the OLD GLORY 5K

RUN / WALK held each Spring in Cold Spring. Over the past six years they have shared their talents and time in organizing this event and providing the proceeds to the DAV of MN Foundation to assist in funding service to veterans' projects in Central MN. Proceeds donated have exceeded over \$120,000. At the presentation DAV State Adjutant Stephen Whitehead stated "as a result of the generosity of Curt and Pam the DAV has been able to purchase two new vans used to provide free transportation for veterans in need of a ride to and from their medical appointments at the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud. In addition, they have designated funds to be used on a walk path on the VA medical campus as well as other service to veterans programs in the St. Cloud area."



Disabled American Veterans of MN present DAV Community Hero Award to Mike McElhiney

Disabled American Veterans of MN (DAV), August 16, 2013 - Mike McElhiney, a wounded 21-year veteran of the United States Army, recently received MN DAVs Community Heroes Award at the Dav event recognizing and celebrating the Twin Cities' *Community of Heroes*sm.

Mike McElhiney is a retired Master Sergeant who began his military career in the Army Infantry just after

graduating from high school in 1989, ultimately rising in the ranks to become the Senior Weapons Sergeant for Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 574.

Mike's ODA made history after the attacks on 9-11 as the first team to infiltrate southern Afghanistan, bringing with them the current president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). On the morning of December 5, 2001, Mike and all of his team members were either killed in action or nearly fatally wounded in a battle north of Kandahar. Mike ultimately lost his right arm as a result of this attack.

Mike now resides in Independence, Minnesota and has a wife and two children. Even though he is retired from active duty, he still continues to actively support veterans through the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs where he serves as Legislative Director. DAV State Adjutant Stephen Whitehead stated at the presentation "Mike was a hero in serving his Country and remains a hero to the DAV and the veterans community as he fights for legislation aimed at providing benefits and protection of benefits and services to veterans here in the State of MN."

News Briefs

St. Cloud VA Designated “Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality”

Recognition was made in the Healthcare Equality index 2013, an annual survey conducted by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the educational arm of the country's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization. The St. Cloud VA HCS earned top marks for its commitment to equitable, inclusive care for LGBT patients and their families, who can face significant challenges in securing adequate health care. The St. cloud VA HCS was one of 464 health care facilities nationwide to be name leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality.

How You Can Prevent Diabetes—<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/9913/how-you-can-prevent-diabetes/>

Trouble Sleeping? The VA has an App for that—<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/10086/trouble-sleeping-va-has-an-app-for-that/>

SmokefreeVET – Text Messaging to Help Veterans Stop Smoking

We are pleased to announce the launch of **SmokefreeVET**, a new mobile text messaging service available to Veterans quitting smoking. This text messaging program is designed to provide 24/7 support, tips, and encouragement to Veterans interested in quitting smoking. SmokefreeVET is a collaboration between VHA Tobacco & Health and the National Cancer Institute’s Tobacco Control Research Branch. SmokefreeVET is based on NCI’s text message smoking cessation program, which has a proven track record of success: after one month, 17% of NCI’s text program users reported that they had quit smoking and 11% were able to stay quit through 6 months. Veterans can sign up for the program by:

Texting **VET to IQUIT (47848)** from their mobile phone
Visiting www.smokefree.gov/VET

After signing up for the program, Veterans will begin receiving between 1 and 5 text messages per day, tailored to their quit date. Messages are sent beginning two weeks prior to the quit date and end six weeks afterwards. Veterans can receive additional supportive messages by texting the keywords **URGE**, **STRESS**, or **SMOKED** at any time to 47848.

News Briefs

For seniors living on a fixed income, we know it can be difficult to afford healthy food on a regular basis.

SNAP is a program that helps seniors and disabled Minnesotans purchase healthy and nutritious food at the grocery store, ensuring you have enough money for well-balanced meals.

If you earn less than \$1,498 per month, you may qualify for SNAP. SNAP provides eligible Minnesotans with an EBT card that can be used to buy groceries in most Minnesota food stores. The average monthly benefit for a senior is \$76 per month, and will vary depending on your income and the number of people living in your household. Once your application is approved, you will receive your EBT card within 30 days.

There is now a simplified application available for older adults to enroll in SNAP. Currently only about half of the seniors eligible for this assistance participate in the program. A simple process exists for eligible seniors and disabled Minnesotans to enroll in SNAP. Please contact the Senior LinkAge Line at 1-800-333-2433 if you have a client who would like to learn more about if they qualify for SNAP and/or need assistance completing the SNAP application.

New Travel reimbursement Process for Veterans at CBOCs

On Monday, August 26, the St. cloud VA HCS changed the process to reimburse beneficiary travel for patients who are seen at any of our CBOCs.

-Previously the clerks at the CBOCs created the voucher and sent it to our facility for processing.

-Now Veterans will complete our yellow "Request for One-Time Direct Deposit of Beneficiary Travel" form and give it to the staff at the CBOC.

-The form will then get routed to our facility, where it will be processed by the Beneficiary Travel staff here.

-The patient will then receive reimbursement via Direct Deposit.

Electronic Cigarettes (E-Cigarettes): The Real Deal

With the recent increase in the price of a pack of cigarettes, many smokers are thinking “This is a good time for me to quit.” If you are one of those people, great! The VA has a number of new and convenient quit programs that can help you be successful. Just check with your Primary Care team or the St. Cloud VA’s Tobacco Cessation Lead Clinician.

If you are not yet ready to quit and are thinking about electronic cigarettes as a cheaper alternative, here are some things you should know. Electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes were developed and patented by the RUYAN Group in Beijing, China. They are still manufactured largely in China. They are sold and distributed in the United States largely through internet sales and now, local smoke shops. The common design characteristics of electronic cigarettes include: a cartridge that contains a liquid form of nicotine in varying levels of concentration in addition to a humectant (often called juice), such as propylene glycol (anti-freeze); a plastic tube into which the cartridge is inserted and the user inhales; and an electronic heating element. The user clicks a button that activates the heating element, a puff of vaporized nicotine is released and a light emitting diode at the end of the tube illuminates to resemble a lit cigarette.

Manufacturers of e-cigarettes have not provided complete information on the chemicals used in the manufacturing process or chemicals that are synthesized during the vaporization process that occur during e-cigarette use. Because of these concerns, as well as concerns about the safety of electronic cigarettes, the sales, marketing, and import of these products are banned in a number of countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, and Singapore. Since these devices don’t fall under FDA jurisdiction, they are basically unregulated in the United States. Laboratory analysis of two widely-marketed e-cigarettes found that these products expose users to many harmful chemical ingredients, including many of the same toxic and cancer causing compounds found in conventional cigarettes.

The bottom line is that e-cigarettes are not a safe alternative to regular cigarettes, may not be used in any areas where smoking is restricted and should not be used as a tobacco cessation aid. For more information, contact your local VA health care facility.



Just think - no more phone tag!

With Secure Messaging thru My Health^eVet, you can contact your VA Healthcare team without waiting on hold or playing phone tag. Secure Messaging is as easy to use as email, but completely safe and secure. It's great for non-urgent communication and general healthcare-related questions.

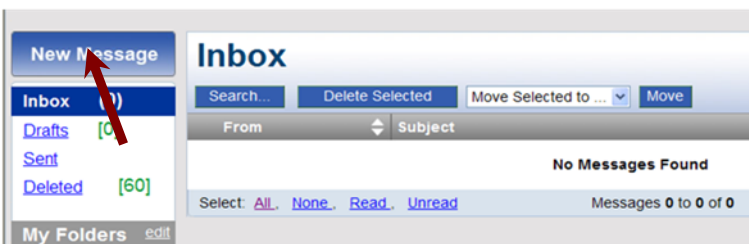
No Waiting on Hold!
No Waiting for a Call Back!
Don't Delay, Opt-in Today!

How to use Secure Messaging:

- 1) Log into your My Health^eVet account at: www.myhealth.va.gov
(Forgot your User ID or Password? Simply click on the 'Forgot User ID' or 'Forgot Password' link directly below the sign in box. Note, you only need to answer one of the two security questions that will appear.)
- 2) Select "Secure Messaging" on the top navigation bar, then click on the orange "Open Secure Messaging" tab in the middle of the screen.
- 3) If it's the first time you're accessing your Secure Messaging inbox, you will need to read the terms and conditions and select 'Opt In'.



- 4) Click 'New Message' and your provider's name will automatically be in the "To" line of the message.



We hope you take advantage of Secure Messaging. If you have any questions about Secure Messaging or My Health^eVet, please contact me via phone or email. I'll be happy to explain this time-saving tool.

You can also stop by my office during your next visit to the St. Cloud VA and I'll help you get on-track with Secure Messaging and many of the other great tools and features of My Health^eVet.



Brian Vetter
My Health^eVet Coordinator
St. Cloud VA Health Care System
Phone: 320-252-1670, dial 9 then ext: 7335





Take care of your buddy!

Help a fellow Veteran enroll
for VA healthcare.

Contact your County Veteran
Service Officer, call the St.
Cloud VA at 320-255-6340,

or apply online at

www.1010ez.med.va.gov

www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS



Connect with us on Facebook!